

Is democracy over?

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As [I noted in this morning's video](#), we had to record before we knew the true scale of Reform's gains in the local council elections in England yesterday. We had no choice. These videos take time to make and edit, especially as we also aim to produce a transcript that is accurate, unlike those that YouTube makes if you opt for their version of subtitling.

As a consequence, as the day went on, I began to wonder whether I had understated my gloom, because Reform's victories in this election have been on a quite astonishing scale.

Some of the swings almost defied logic. What happened in Durham was extraordinary. A Labour council for more than a century, it gained just 4.1% of the vote this time, with Reform taking 66%.

In Staffordshire, reform got 79% of the vote.

Reform now controls ten councils. The Tories and Labour lost all those they had controlled.

Contrary to my expectations when I made the video, the Greens and Liberal Democrats did make gains, but they were not that significant.

In contrast, the wipe out of the Conservatives makes it hard to see how that party can recover from this in decades, or maybe ever. In that sense, I got the video entirely right.

And, the rejection of Labour, although in areas where it was never strong, was also staggering. This was not the normal rejection of a party soon after securing office. There is something very clearly much deeper than this in the voter rejection of Labour at local authority level.

So, what to make of these results?

The first thing is to say is that I do wonder how long it will be before Reform implodes. Everything else that Nigel Farage has created has done so to date.

UKIP failed because Farage could not cope in the end. He could not stand his party, and they could not stand him.

The same has to be said of the Brexit Party. It, too, was a failure.

Should this time be different? There is a very good chance that it will not be. Just like UKIP and the Brexit Party, Reform is a one-man party that appears to be driven by prejudice, hate and diatribe, in all of which actual policy appears to be absent.

What happens when Farage does, once more, buckle under the pressure of having to be accountable?

And what also happens when people with nothing more than hate in common fall out with each other, as is very likely? The parliamentary party already has, after all.

In addition, what are these Reform councillors, now facing the massive obligation that running a local authority imposes, to actually do? Migration is not, after all, an issue over which they have any control, and they will not be able to refuse to deal with its consequences. The law will not allow that.

So, will they instead attempt to cut local authority expenditure when in the majority of cases, services have already been pruned to a legally permitted minimum level, or that expenditure represents commitments on past costs, such as interest in borrowing, that they will have absolutely no control over?

Will they, despite that, try to do a Musk?

Will they cut services for vulnerable adults, education and child social care (which will form the majority of their budget) without consideration for the consequences?

Will they close all libraries, parks, sports facilities, sports grounds and other services, making it clear that Reform has no interest in servicing the communities that voted for it?

Or will they, when they are responsible for them, rapidly reduce other services, even if cutting services such as public health, education, local road repairs, and other things is bound to cause considerable anxiety in their communities?

Not one new Reform councillor probably has a clue how to answer these questions as yet. I suspect that the majority of them never thought that they would win, let alone that they might now have the responsibility for actually delivering policy rather than ranting from the sidelines while singing the praises of their great leader.

I should not wish chaos, mismanagement, poor governance, and disruption of local government services on any part of this country. But, I think it is likely that these things will happen if Reform tries to carry through on those things that have been talked about. That will happen because of the likely incompetence of those councillors who have been elected, most of whom will have absolutely no experience of what is involved with the task that they are now being asked to undertake.

But it will also happen because I strongly suspect they will fall out with themselves, others they might have to work with on councils, and with the party hierarchy.

The only good news in this is that the number of councils that they will now control will, potentially, provide collective evidence of their inability when, most especially, the majority of those people who have stood for office to this party did so solely because of their hatred of migrants on whom the economy of this country is dependent.

What the Tories might do in response to this is something I really do not much care about. I suspect that Reform will replace that party before, within a matter of years, before it, too, implodes.

What Labour will do is a matter about which I have more concern, because I consider it very likely that it will now swing very much further right, instead of seeking to do what is obviously needed, which is to win the votes of all those people who are alienated by everything to do with right-of-centre politics.

I wish the Greens would get their policy act together because, as I have long suggested, they are a long way from doing so.

If the Liberal Democrats wanted to have anything useful to say, they would have to kick out of their party everyone associated with their Orange Book era. They need to leave right-wing politics far behind, and Clegg took them there.

And if none of this happens, then, to repeat what I said in the video, we are in the deepest, darkest trouble unless electoral reform allows new parties comprising people with new and open minds, and ability, to emerge into our political arena. However, I think I have little hope of seeing that. In which case, I am forced to note that I never expected to see the end of democracy in this country during the course of my lifetime, but I now think that there is a serious possibility that I will.